



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge Update: Fall 2005

Busy Times for Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge!

*Non-Albatross Season,
New Fiscal Year, More Laysan
Ducks Bring Many Changes*

Construction season, a continuing endangered species recovery project, and a new support services contract at Midway Atoll converged to make September and October busy months in the life of Midway's refuge staff. With help from other Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Geological Survey employees and numerous contractors, many changes are occurring in the midst of the Pacific.

New Operations Contract

A new contract for base operations support services became effective on October 1, the first day of the U.S. government's fiscal year. The 1-year contract includes options to extend the contract for 4 additional years. The contract was awarded to Chugach Industries Inc. of Anchorage, Alaska.

The support services contract covers operation of the basic infrastructure of Sand Island and Henderson Airfield, including the generation and distribution of electricity; operating the water system; disposing of waste; managing and maintaining facilities and equipment; providing food, housing, and medical services; operating the airfield and fuel farm, and maintaining historic structures. We are now in a 3-month transition period, after which Chugach should be fully staffed to meet its contract commitments.

Construction Projects

More visible on the ground are all the construction projects underway. As usual, we schedule most of our construction projects while the albatross are at sea to enhance our efficiency and minimize disturbance of nesting birds to the extent possible.

A new large reverse osmosis water system is now up and running, providing water for domestic use. The project also included replacing the water distribution system to buildings. The old water system is still in place, but is used for such purposes as fire suppression and greenhouse watering.

Two new 450-kilowatt generators are now in place, along with two new switch gears. One of these generators generally meets the island's electrical needs, but the second one automatically kicks on when needed. We still have the larger Caterpillar generator and one working Fairbanks Morse generator as backups. Next year, we will be working on replacing the electrical distribution system.

We also did some work in the fuel farm to restore the cathodic protection system. An inspection of one of the 40-year-old fuel farm tanks led to some repairs, but revealed significant deterioration of the tank's roof and that the tank liner needs to be replaced. Hopefully, we will be able to replace the fuel farm with smaller tanks (300,000 gallon total capacity rather than the existing 2.1 million gallon total) within a few years.

New Purchases

We also have some new equipment for refuge management purposes: a 50-ton wheeled crane is already on island to offload equipment and supplies from barges. A new bulldozer will be delivered next year to help with habitat work and building cleanup projects.



One of two new Caterpillar generators installed at Midway Atoll.

The electrical switchgears that operate the two generators and distribute power throughout Sand Island.



Most of the parts for a new radio system have arrived on island, and we hope to install them this winter. We also purchased fiber-optics cable for a new data and voice communications system. The cable will be stored until sufficient funding is available to complete the project.

Department of Transportation Airport Capital Improvement funds allowed us to purchase a new 1,500-gallon fire truck for airfield operations, a new operations truck, and airport-grade fire extinguishers. We also awarded a contract for an Airport Master Plan, which will direct future

expenditures from this fund. These activities benefit the airfield not only by reducing operational costs, but also by increasing airfield safety.

New Ducks!

Stand by for more information in the near future, but 22 Laysan Ducks have now arrived at Midway from Laysan Island in the Hawaiian Islands National Wildlife Refuge. These birds will join the 19 ducks moved here last year, plus the 9 or 10 offspring they produced this year. Most of the birds will probably be released on Eastern Island this year, thanks to the hard work of both staff and

volunteers to create new habitat for the ducks on that island.

All in all, it has been a very busy time here on Midway! And soon we will be welcoming hundreds of thousands of Black-footed and Laysan Albatrosses back to the island. Though we can't say it has been quiet without them, we will welcome the return of their clacks, squeals, and moos!

Questions?

Please call Refuge Manager Barry Christenson at 808 674 8237.



Midway's new reverse osmosis water system (and yes, Sak is running it!).



We almost forgot a BIG construction project . . . the Giant Gooney needed a nose (beak) job and was treated for termites in July!



A proud Laysan Duck hen shows off part of her brood.



At about a month of age, these chicks are thriving.



The new crane at work.

